

Vietnam and CORDS: Interagency Lessons for Iraq

**A Monograph
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Abstract

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Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine emphasizes the importance of unity of effort between all agencies involved in a COIN fight. The same doctrine, and history, stresses that unity of effort is best achieved through consolidating all efforts under a single chain of command or leader. When multiple agencies pursue differing agendas unity of effort suffers.

Interagency coordination and synchronization issues at the highest levels of the US Government continue to affect the war in Iraq. The Department of Defense and Department of State have overlapping responsibilities for Iraq. This problem is best studied through the efforts of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and Stability and Reconstruction efforts in Iraq. The President has issued various National Security Directives regarding Stability and Reconstruction in Iraq and which Agencies lead, but the issue is far from resolved.

The US Government faced a similar problem during the Vietnam War. As Vietnam grew in scope and scale the US Government faced a challenge in coordinating the efforts of all of the Agencies involved in the war. After a number of unsuccessful attempts by several Presidents, President Johnson established the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) program. CORDS consolidated all efforts, civilian and military, conventional and COIN, under a single chain of command and a single leader. CORDS is generally regarded as a successful program in spite of the Vietnam War's final outcome.

Lessons learned in the development of CORDS can be applied to the current situation in Iraq. By comparing the developments leading to CORDS with the current developments in Iraq similarities can be identified; lessons from CORDS are indeed applicable.

The monograph concludes that the lessons from Vietnam are relevant to Iraq. The monograph recommends that the US Government adopt a CORDS-like approach to Iraq and consolidate Stability and Reconstruction efforts under the Department of Defense rather the Department of State to achieve unity of effort in Iraq.

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Introduction

As the war in Iraq continues into its sixth year, hurdles remain to achieving President Bush's vision of 'victory in Iraq' as defined in the White Houses' *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*. While the US military has made significant progress towards defeating Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, the security situation in Iraq remains tenuous and the road ahead in Iraq is not well defined.

The *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* articulates the broad US strategy for Iraq. The report defines: 1) short, medium and long-term conditions for victory in Iraq, 2) three integrated political, security and economic tracks for Iraq, 3) the eight strategic pillars, associated actions and objectives for civilian and military organizations and 4) a three-tiered 'organization for victory' in Iraq.¹ The strategy is dependent on achieving a whole of government approach to Iraq, and thus requires an effective interagency approach to unifying the many US Government (USG) agencies called on to achieve victory.

National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD 44), published one month after the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, clearly articulates and further emphasizes that a whole of

¹ George Bush, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* (Washington DC: United States Government, 2005), 1-3.

government approach is required “to prepare, plan for, and conduct reconstruction and stabilization assistance and related activities” in “foreign states and regions at risk of, in, or transition from conflict or civil strife.”² NSPD 44 also states, “The Secretary of State shall coordinate and lead integrated US government efforts... to prepare, plan for, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction activities. The Secretary of State shall coordinate such efforts with the Secretary of Defense to ensure harmonization with... ongoing US military operations.”³ In short, the Department of State will lead the interagency effort to achieve victory in Iraq.

What is the level of interagency ‘harmonization’, as directed by NSPD 44, achieved six years into the war in Iraq? As recently as November 2007 the US Government found “limited agency actions taken” to guide Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) operating in Iraq. The lack of interagency coordination (or harmonization) is such that a US Government audit team in Iraq to assess the actions of PRTs found that, even after its third audit in two years, there were no “clearly defined objectives or performance measures to guide PRTs and determine their accomplishments.”⁴ The same report also found that the security situation in Iraq hampered PRT

² George Bush, *National Security Presidential Directive 44*, (Washington DC: United States Government, 2005) 1-2.

³ Bush, *NSPD 44*, 2.

⁴ Office of Special Investigator for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), *Status of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Program in Iraq* (Virginia: Office of Inspector General, 2007), 1-10.

efforts to develop the economy and that some PRTs were unable to leave their secure bases to interact with their Iraqi ‘counterparts’ at all.⁵

PRTs are the tool this monograph will use to explore the issues hampering the interagency ‘harmonization’ of the whole of government approach in Iraq. The Department of State established PRTs in Iraq on 1 October 2005 through Cable 4045. With Cable 4045 PRTs became the focal point of Department of State and Department of Defense interagency coordination in Iraq to address the soon to be published *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*.

The mission of PRTs in Iraq is to act as a US-led, civil-military effort to help Iraq’s provincial and local governments govern effectively and deliver essential services.⁶ The PRT mission in Iraq is Department of State led (through the US Mission) and directly supports the State Department’s *Strategic Plan* goals for Iraq: to build a democratic, stable and economically prosperous Iraq, which in turn supports the President’s strategy.⁷ Unfortunately, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR⁸) finds a lack of clearly defined goals or

⁵ Ibid., ii, x, 1.

⁶ Ibid., i.

⁷ Department of State, *Department of State / USAID Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2007-2012* (Washington DC: US Government, 2007), 50.

⁸ SIGIR, the successor to the Coalition Provisional Authority Inspector General (CPA-IG), was created by Congress to provide oversight of the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF) and all obligations, expenditures, and revenues associated with reconstruction and rehabilitation

objectives for PRTs in Iraq, poor Department of State synchronization with the US military in Iraq and unwillingness by the US Mission in Iraq to address the issues that continue to hamper US progress.⁹

This is not a new problem. In 2005, the same issues were apparent. Dale Andrade states, “In Iraq... the Coalition Provisional Authority suffered from the same problems that caused the formation of CORDS, in particular a dual chain of command that failed to coordinate military and civilian efforts.”¹⁰ In summary: lack of interagency coordination regarding stabilization and reconstruction, exemplified by the ineffectiveness and synchronization issues effecting many PRTs, hampers US efforts to achieve the goals of the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*.

While the US military is well suited to deal with the complexity and enormity of the ongoing conflict and the current security situation in Iraq, other members of the US Government’s team in Iraq may not be so capable or willing to deal with the current situation. In the words of Mr. David Passage, a career diplomat and former US Ambassador, “the current operating environment in [Iraq] is so dangerous – not only for PRT members, but for their colleagues based

activities in Iraq. SIGIR oversight is accomplished via independent audits, field inspections, and criminal investigations into potential fraud, waste, and abuse of funds.

⁹ SIGIR, 5-7.

¹⁰ Dale Andrade, “Three Lessons from Vietnam”, *Washington Post*, December 29, 2005.

in the capital – that one must question whether civilian personnel can work safely at all, no matter how well trained or equipped they are.”¹¹

History and current doctrine are clear: in order to achieve unity of effort for stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq all contributing agencies and efforts in Iraq should come under a single chain of command and a single leader. At this point in the war in Iraq, given the security situation, the complexity and the enormity of problem, the logical choice for the lead agency with respect to stability and reconstruction is the Department of Defense. The Department of State should assume a supporting role for Stabilization and Reconstruction until the security situation is at a level where it is clear that Iraq is truly in the *post-conflict* stage and the Department of State has the capacity and resources to manage the situation.

President Lyndon Johnson established the precedent for this action during the Vietnam War: in order to achieve unity of effort the President put all Department of State Pacification efforts under the US Military and appointed a civilian as the deputy commander to manage the effort. This decision came after years of unsuccessful efforts to coordinate the efforts of the Department of Defense and Department of State with respect to the Vietnam War.

¹¹ David Passage, “Caution: Iraq is Not Vietnam,” *Foreign Service Journal* (November 2007): 13.

Methodology

This monograph highlights PRTs because PRTs are the most visible element charged with implementing Department of State stabilization and reconstruction goals outlined in the Presidents *Strategy for Victory in Iraq* in conjunction with the US military.¹² In order assess the optimal structure for the command and control of interagency, especially Department of State stability and reconstruction efforts in Iraq, the monograph will compare and contrast Iraq PRTs and the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) program in the Vietnam War.

This monograph first examines a number of key terms and concepts from current Department of Defense and US Government doctrine with respect to the current discussions of the Iraq war. After defining and discussing applicable key terms and concepts, the monograph will describe the conditions that led to President Lyndon Johnson's decision to place the Department of State efforts under the Department of Defense and the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) headquarters during the Vietnam War.

After reviewing the developments and decisions that led to the creation of the CORDS program, the monograph will briefly discuss the history of the PRT program in Iraq to analyze the

¹² Baghdad Cable 4045, *Action Plan to Build Capacity and Sustainability within Iraq's Provincial Government* (American Embassy Baghdad, October 1, 2005), 1-2.

organizational context of current PRTs in Iraq and CORDS in Vietnam. A comparison of CORDS and PRT interagency efforts, in conjunction with a review of current directives and doctrine, will support the conclusion that the US Government should adopt a CORDS-like approach to Iraq and the interagency process in order to achieve unity of effort.

Relevant Terms and Definitions

The definition of key terms and phrases is important to the debate surrounding Iraq and the applicability of CORDS to Iraq. While ambiguity is preferred in some situations and by some agencies, ambiguity can be detrimental to clear understanding and coordination in others.

Ambiguous categorization of efforts and responsibilities for stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq is just one such example of this detrimental effect; i.e. words matter.

Measures of Effectiveness and their relationship to assessing operations are critical to understand with respect to PRT efforts and language in Baghdad Cable 4045. The definitions of *Stability Operations*, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, *Reconstruction*, *Conflict*, *Post-Conflict* and *Peacekeeping* operations are also important to the argument.

Measures of Effectiveness (MOE) assess changes in system behavior, capability or in the operational environment. MOE are how forces measure or assess the attainment of an end state

or an objective or the creation of an effect.”¹³ MOE do not measure task performance; they are typically more subjective than pure task performance measures or ‘metrics’ and can be qualitative or quantitative. However crafted, MOE have a critical role; they tell an organization “are we doing the right things, are our actions producing the desired effects, or are alternative actions required?” In other words, MOE tell an organization if its actions are achieving the desired goals – is the plan working or not? Well-crafted MOE help an organization assess progress on achieving goals, while lack of MOE enable an organization to avoid answering hard questions on progress or effectiveness.

Stability Operations are defined differently throughout Joint and Army Doctrine. Per FM 3-0, Stability Operations are “an overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction and humanitarian relief.”¹⁴

FM 3-0 further defines Stability Operations as one of three types of operations that Army forces conduct during *full spectrum operations* during Joint Campaigns (see FM 3-0 figure 3-1 below.)¹⁵

¹³ Department of Defense, *JP 3-0 Joint Operations* (Washington DC: US Government, 2006), IV-32.

¹⁴ Department of the Army, *FM 3-0 Operations*, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2008), Glossary 13.

¹⁵ Ibid., 3-1.

Full spectrum operations (offense, defense and stability) often involve continuous interaction between multinational partners, adversaries, civil authorities... and other civilian agencies and US forces. These operations require US forces “to defeat the enemy and simultaneously shape civil conditions.”¹⁶ Stability operations are, essentially, a military undertaking, during a military campaign, using military resources. There are components of stability operations that civilian agencies are better equipped to address, but all activities take place under the construct of militarily resourced and executed operations.

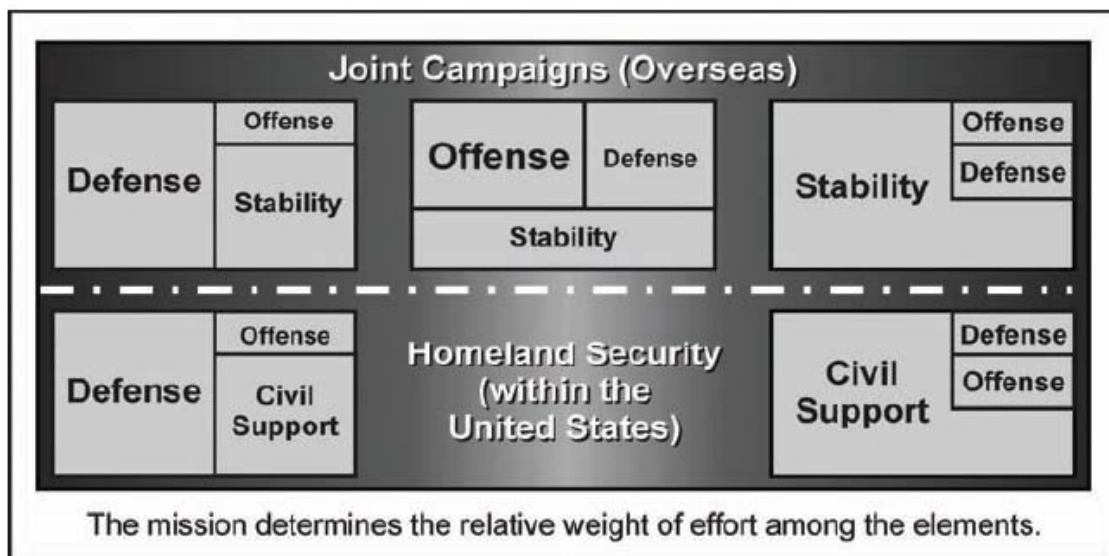


Figure 3-1. Full spectrum operations—the Army's operational concept

¹⁶ Ibid., 3-2.

DODD 3000.05 defines Stability Operations as: “Military and civilian activities conducted across the spectrum from peace to conflict to establish or maintain order in States and regions.”¹⁷ DODD 3000.05 includes Stability Operations as a subset of Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations.

It is noteworthy that *Reconstruction* or *Reconstruction Operations* are *not* defined in DODD 3000.05, FM 3-0, FM 3-24 or JP 1-0, 3-0, 5-0, or in other US Government documents relevant to Iraq. All of these manuals have numerous references to Reconstruction and Reconstruction Operations, often with respect to SSTR Operations, but the term itself is not defined. For the purposes of this monograph, Reconstruction Operations is a subset of Stability Operations as per the definitions of Stability Operations found in FM 3-0, JP 3-0 and DODD 3000.05, and taken to mean the efforts undertaken to rebuild and / or improve the physical infrastructure of Iraq after the 2003 invasion. This monograph also treats Reconstruction as a component of Stability Operations within the SSTR construct and within the Army’s full spectrum operations construct.

¹⁷ Department of Defense Directive Number 3000.05 *Military Support for Stability Security Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2005), 1. <http://www.js.pentagon.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/300005p.pdf>. (accessed August 1, 2008).

Counterinsurgency (COIN) is “those military, paramilitary, political, economic psychological and civic *actions* taken by government to defeat insurgency.”¹⁸ “Offensive and defensive operations are integral to COIN. COIN differs from peacekeeping... in this regard; indeed this is a key point. In peacekeeping... combat is not expected and the goal is the absence of violence.”¹⁹ COIN operations occur within the construct of full spectrum operations when US forces are involved in combating an insurgency, which may or may not take place in conjunction with combating conventional forces (see figure 1-20, FM 3-24 below.) In addition, US forces conducting COIN operations “must also understand the broader context within which they are operating. A mission to assist a functioning government [differs] from situations where no such viable entity exists or where a regime has been changed by conflict.”²⁰

A key difference in the definitions of Stability Operations and Counterinsurgency operations is relevant to explain at this point. Stability operations, by definition, are one component of full spectrum operations, which broadly encompass the three general types of operations the US military conducts during wartime. By definition, US military forces conduct full spectrum operations that have varying percentages or amounts of offense, defense and stability operations in them. COIN, on the other hand, is an activity, or a mission, conducted within the overarching

4. ¹⁸ Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*. (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2007), Glossary

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-20.

construct of full spectrum operations during a Joint Campaign to defeat an insurgency. In short, COIN operations are one of the ‘missions’ referred to in the ‘variety of missions’ phrase used to define stability operations.

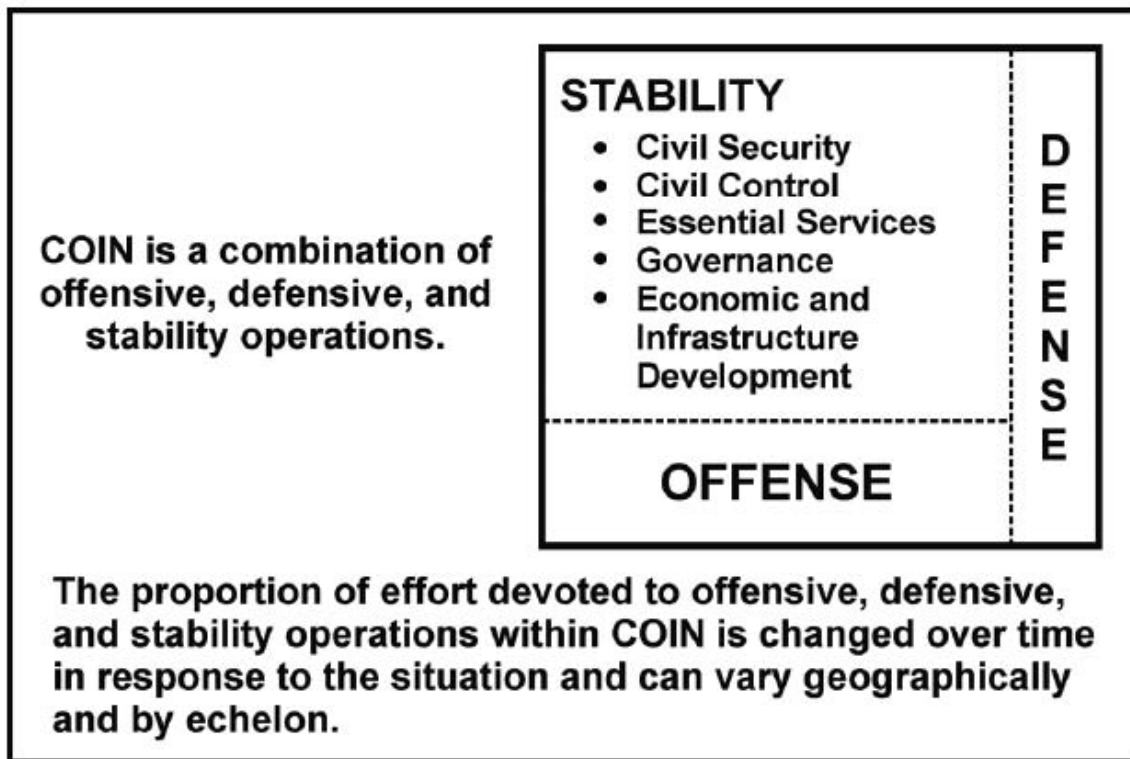


Figure 1-1. Aspects of counterinsurgency operations

²⁰ Ibid., 1-20.

Peacekeeping operations are “military operations undertaken with the consent of all major parties to a dispute, designed to monitor and facilitate implementation of an agreement... and support diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement.”²¹ *Peacekeeping*... differs in the respect that an agreement between all major parties is in place and that they occur with the consent of the parties; it is important to emphasize again that combat *is not expected* in peacekeeping operations and that a secure environment is the norm.²²

Conflict and *post-conflict* operations are equally confusing to define, but equally relevant to the discussion. Conflict is “an armed struggle or clash between organized groups within a nation... in order to achieve limited political or military objectives. Although regular forces are often involved, irregular forces frequently predominate. Conflict is often protracted....”²³ Post-conflict operations are “those stability operations that are conducted in the period following conflict termination.”²⁴ Lastly, with respect to these terms, *conflict termination* is “the point at

²¹ Department of the Army, *FM 3-0*, Glossary 11.

²² Peacekeeping differs from peace enforcement with respect to the use of force. Peace enforcement involves compelling compliance, with force, or threat of force to enforce an agreement. See FM 1-02 for further related definitions.

²³ Department of the Army, *FM 1-02*, (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2004), 1-43.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-148.

which the principle means of conflict shifts from the use or threat of force to other means of persuasion.”²⁵

It is therefore possible to deduce, logically, that the war in Iraq is still in the conflict phase and that US military forces are engaged in Stability Operations (or SSTR operations per the Joint definition) and are executing a preponderance of COIN type missions.

This is an important distinction to make with respect to the roles and responsibilities of US Government agencies. The principle, but not the only, means of persuasion in Iraq are still the use of (or threat of) force against the insurgency. The principle agency providing both the assets and resources, at the time of this monograph, is the Department of Defense. The announcement of the ‘end of major [conventional] combat operations’ may have come and gone, but combat operations still predominate Iraq and it is largely an unsecure environment. Because Iraq is still in the *conflict* phase, it logically follows that Iraq has not entered the *post-conflict* phase.

Vietnam and CORDS

During the Vietnam War the US military faced an incredibly complex military and political situation. The enemy was a combination of insurgents, political cadre and modern conventional

²⁵ Ibid., 1-43.

units. Any of the forces would have been significant in and of themselves, but in combination, they presented a very formidable threat.²⁶

When US conventional forces fully intervened in 1965 estimates of enemy forces were over 500,000: guerilla and Communist Party front strength was 300,000, North Vietnamese conventional forces numbered 230,000.²⁷ US commanders confronting this threat faced a dilemma. Should they focus on fighting the conventional forces or focus on counterinsurgency? General Westmoreland understood the twin threat, but in 1965, he believed the enemy conventional forces were the most pressing threat and focused there. His logic was that the conventional forces were “bully boys with crowbars” who were trying to tear down the South Vietnamese “house” while the guerillas were “termites” that could also destroy the “house” but would take much longer to do so.²⁸

General Westmoreland’s decision was rooted in the US Army’s approach to Vietnam dating to the mid 1950’s. His predecessors in the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (MAAGV) had concentrated on preparing South Vietnamese forces to resist a conventional

²⁶ Dale Andrade, “CORDS / Phoenix: counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam for the future,” *Military Review* (March-April 2006): 5.

Graham Cosmas, *MACV the Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-67* (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2006), 11-22.

²⁷ Andrade, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

invasion across the 17th parallel. The US plan for the defense of South Vietnam involved a lightly equipped conventional South Vietnamese Army and Air Force, which would delay a conventional invasion until US reinforcements could arrive. MAAGV commanders had always assumed that the same conventional units could resist any guerilla challenge in South Vietnam.²⁹

North Vietnamese plans however, ran counter to a conventional invasion. Between 1957 and 1967, North Vietnam launched an insurgency in South Vietnam. The insurgency was ostensibly an uprising of indigenous South Vietnamese against their government, but was well directed, organized and supported by North Vietnam. Once begun, the insurgency made rapid progress across its three broad fronts of terrorism, political agitation and military actions. By the end of 1960, the Viet Cong had an estimated 15,000 men under arms and exercised *de facto* control over large portions of rural South Vietnam.³⁰

The threat of an effective North Vietnamese insurgency was not a surprise to the US. As early as 1955 the CIA found “that should the [North Vietnamese] initiate a large scale guerilla operation supported by substantial infiltrations from the north, the South Vietnamese government would be hard pressed and probably would require outside military assistance to survive.”³¹

²⁹ Cosmas, 11.

³⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

³¹ Ibid., 15.

By 1960, the US became aware of the severity of the insurgent threat. The US answer was increased conventional military aide to South Vietnam and US Army Special Forces to help train South Vietnamese counter-guerilla units. Simultaneously, various US agencies began developing, independently, their 'own' counterinsurgency plans for the defense of South Vietnam.³²

Pacification, a term denoting a counterinsurgency effort, also emerged in the discussion of Vietnam at this time.³³ The term itself originated out of nineteenth century French colonial wars of conquest in North Africa and referred to the efforts to both recapture territory from insurgents and to win the loyalty of the inhabitants. With respect to the US effort in Vietnam, Pacification (or the overall counterinsurgency effort) focused on developing loyalty and support for the South Vietnamese local and national governments among the South Vietnamese civilian population in order to deny sanctuary to the Viet Cong insurgents.³⁴

Further complicating efforts, in 1961 President John F. Kennedy created the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as an independent federal agency, which received its guidance from the State Department. From 1962 to 1975, thousands of USAID

³² Ibid., 15-16.

³³ Ibid., 17.

³⁴ Ronald Frankum & Stephan Maxner, *The Vietnam War for Dummies* (New York: Wiley Publishing, 2003), 237-239.

workers operated throughout South Vietnam establishing schools and medical facilities, developing infrastructure and implementing nonmilitary aid to South Vietnam.

Interagency issues clouded the picture from the beginning of the Vietnam War as a myriad of organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, contributed to or were directly involved in Vietnam. Soon after the Korean War the International Cooperation Administration and the Development Loan Fund, organizations created through the Marshall plan, began nonmilitary assistance to the Republic of Vietnam.³⁵ As early as 1955 resources from these organizations were directed towards achieving land reform and training for South Vietnamese police and intelligence forces to support counter insurgency tactics against Viet Min remnants.³⁶

Due to the many of programs and agencies operating in Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s competing ideology, agendas and goals emerged. Interagency coordination suffered accordingly. Scoville notes, “It was no rarity for several American agencies to present conflicting advice to the South Vietnamese officials at various administrative levels.”³⁷

³⁵ Lawrence Yates, *The US Military's Experience in Stability Operations, 1789-2005* (Ft Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2005), 80-83.

³⁶ Ibid., 83.

³⁷ Thomas Scoville, *Reorganizing for Pacification Support* (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1982), 7.

The US decided that the increase in the size and scope of the mission to support South Vietnam warranted the formation of a new headquarters to control the forces. First proposed in 1960, the issue bogged down in extended debates between the Department of State and Defense over the relationship of the military command to the US ambassador and the other agencies in his country team.³⁸

One of two fundamental questions in the development of the new headquarters was whether the military commander would be subordinate to, or independent of, the ambassador. A key consideration of this question was the degree of authority each would wield over the counterinsurgency effort and activities of the CIA and USAID. The other looming issue was the overall balance between military and nonmilitary elements in the counterinsurgency effort. Put another way: *was the fight against the Viet Cong a military fight (DOD lead) or was the military to play only a supporting role in a comprehensive, whole of government (DOS lead), effort?* (the second view was that of President Kennedy and his advisors.)³⁹

After months of interagency wrangling and debate over the issue, the Departments of State and Defense agreed; the new headquarters would be the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). The MACV commander would operate as ‘coequal’ to the ambassador while acting as

³⁸ Cosmas, 21.

³⁹ Ibid., 21-22.

the “principle US military advisor” to the commander in chief of the South Vietnamese armed forces and would also exercise independent military authority over US forces. The MACV commander would direct US military activities and advise the Saigon government on internal security and on the organization, deployment and operations of the armed forces; MACV was an operational headquarters whereas MAAG had been an assistance headquarters.⁴⁰ These responsibilities meant the MACV commander could hold independent discussions with the President and leaders of South Vietnam and that his only requirement vis-à-vis the ambassador was “to keep the ambassador fully informed about his high-level contacts with [the] government and to ‘consult’ with him on ‘political and basic policy matters.’”⁴¹

The arrangement met with strong protests from both the MAAG commander and the US ambassador. In spite of the protests, the command went into effect in February 1962 when General Harkins arrived in Saigon to take command of MACV.

MACV represented an interagency compromise from its inception. In the words of Graham Cosmos, “coordination rested on fragile foundations. Unity of effort within the American mission depended finally on personal rapport between the ambassador and the MACV

⁴⁰ Alexander S. Cochran, “American Planning for Ground Combat in Vietnam: 1952-1965,” in *Assessing the Vietnam War*, ed. Lloyd Matthews and Dale Brown (Washington, Pergamon, 1987) 81-90.

⁴¹ Cosmos, 24.

commander and on treaty arrangements.”⁴² The military tended to dominate the discussions based on possessing the preponderance of resources and a schism soon developed between the civilian counterinsurgency programs and the military effort.⁴³

The Saigon unity of effort issues reached back to Washington as well. President Kennedy neglected to provide “continuing, authoritative interagency oversight of the expanded effort in Vietnam [once MACV was established], and what direction was provided came from the Department of Defense.”⁴⁴ What coordination did occur relied on personal relationships between Secretary of State Rusk and Secretary of Defense McNamara with McNamara assuming the lead for the Vietnam effort. Thus, in the words of the outgoing MAAG commander, the Kennedy administration committed itself to solving “a very unconventional problem in, basically, a conventional way.”⁴⁵

After the Diem Coup in November 1963 (which is beyond the scope of this monograph), the working relationship between MACV and the ambassador quickly deteriorated. The US Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., left soon after to pursue the Republican Presidential Nomination. By early 1964, Kennedy and his advisors lost faith in General Harkins. General

⁴² Ibid., 28.

⁴³ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 29.

Westmoreland soon arrived as the deputy MACV commander and assumed command of MACV on 1 August 1964.⁴⁶

By Westmoreland's guidance, the primary role of the US Army in South Vietnam was to support the South Vietnamese military through increased advisory capability and manning and to defeat the conventional North Vietnamese threat and then to deal with the South Vietnamese insurgents (Viet Cong) through Pacification.⁴⁷

Ambassador Taylor,⁴⁸ appointed by President Johnson as Lodge's replacement, resisted any major organizational changes to the mechanism he inherited from Lodge. Taylor instead instituted the Mission Council to coordinate civilian and military efforts. The Mission Council was to operate as a 'mini-NSC', but in reality did not "bring about complete civil-military harmony... Contact and cooperation between the MACV staff and those of the US Mission and the CIA... remained occasional at best. The civilian agencies resented and resisted what they

⁴⁶ Ibid., 122-23.

⁴⁷ William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: De Capo, 1989), 220-223.

⁴⁸ Ambassador Taylor enjoyed a strong personal relationship with President Kennedy. He was a genuine World War II war hero and had risen to the Army Chief of Staff under President Eisenhower where he opposed the 'New Look' Army and later authored 'The Uncertain Trumpet'. During the Kennedy administration, he chaired a committee investigating the Bay of Pigs. One of his conclusions was that the CIA was incapable of leading large operations. President Kennedy recalled General Taylor to active duty to serve as the 'Military Advisor to the President' and soon after as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Taylor was also an advocate of increased troops in Vietnam. In 1964 General Taylor retired a second time in order to serve as the Ambassador to Vietnam shortly after President Kennedy's assassination.

considered military interference with their counterinsurgency programs.”⁴⁹ Civilian programs were still free to resist change by resisting Saigon efforts by appealing to their Washington DC based heads as well.⁵⁰

As the US became more heavily involved in the ground war and conventional fighting increased in 1965, the effects on the South Vietnamese population changed the dynamics of the war. Large-scale conventional operations and an increase in the use of heavy firepower destroyed farms and forced the dislocation of the South Vietnamese rural population in many areas. Both the South Vietnamese government and the United States recognized the problems of the newly created refugees, but did little to alleviate the problem. As a result, the displaced South Vietnamese population often had to fend for itself. This created provided a fertile recruiting ground for the Viet Cong that further complicated the Pacification efforts.⁵¹

Based on these developments, General Westmorland’s early guidance, personality and necessity, the coordination of Pacification programs fell to the background. MACV campaign plans show that Pacification was important, but battlefield-staffing realities and Westmoreland’s personality forced the effort into a secondary role and he chose a conventional military approach

⁴⁹ Cosmas, 141.

⁵⁰ Scoville, 9.

⁵¹ Frankum, 250-51.

as the primary effort.⁵² Arguments over the validity of the decision to focus on the conventional North Vietnamese forces first continue today, but are irrelevant to this monograph. What is relevant are the coordination and synchronization efforts, *or* failures, between the conventional fight and the civilian-lead Pacification programs resulting in the development of CORDS.

In 1965, Henry Kissinger⁵³, then a Professor of Government at Harvard, appraised the overall Pacification effort in Vietnam and wrote “there was little integration of the various American programs, that [Pacification] management lines were hopelessly tangled, and that the entire management structure needs to be overhauled.”⁵⁴ In theory, each agency developed its own programs and coordinated them through the US Embassy in Saigon, but this was rarely the case. At the same time, the rapid influx of conventional ground forces meant a corresponding increase in the number of military advisors.

In addition to the civilian agencies running counterinsurgency programs, there were US military advisors working in all 44 provinces and most of the 243 districts in South Vietnam.⁵⁵ The massive increase in conventional ground forces and conventional military operations made it

⁵² Andrade, 2.

⁵³ Henry Kissinger served as the Director of the Harvard Defense Studies Program between 1958 and 1971. He was also Director of the Harvard International Seminar between 1951 and 1971. He ‘officially’ moved into government with the Nixon Administration where he served as the National Security Advisor and Secretary of State.

⁵⁴ Scoville, 17.

much harder for the varied counterinsurgency efforts to cope with the changing situation. The lack of formal mechanism for combining or synchronizing efforts between civilian organizations and the US military grossly exacerbated the problem.⁵⁶

Throughout the MAAG and early MACV eras there were generally two fundamental institutional schisms that impeded synchronized efforts in South Vietnam. The first was the issue of security vs. development, or put another way: military led efforts vs. civilian led efforts. The second was that Ambassador Lodge was reluctant to directly oversee or manage the activities of the numerous US Government agencies operating on their own agendas throughout South Vietnam prior to 1964 or again in 1965, yet he was also unwilling to delegate the task.⁵⁷ Ambassador (General) Taylor, even with his strong credentials and military background, also failed to coordinate the inter-agency activities during his single year as ambassador. According to Wells: “all [efforts] eventually failed due to the fact that [each agency] had their own budget and ‘chain of command’ that reached back to Washington” rather than to a single entity in Saigon.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Andrade, 4-5.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 4-5.

⁵⁷ Gordon Wells, *No more Vietnams: CORDS as a Model for Counterinsurgency Campaign Design* (Ft Leavenworth, KS: SAMS Monograph, 1991), 26-27.

Scoville, 7-8.

⁵⁸ Wells, 27.

By 1965, President Johnson and his advisors began to recognize the troubles created through lack of coordination between agencies and programs. President Johnson's advisors and a number of independent observers concluded that the entire system needed an overhaul. Johnson soon took a personal interest in the Pacification effort and got involved in how to run "the other war." The President's initial effort to address the problem was to grant newly re-appointed Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge written authority "to exercise full responsibility" over the Pacification effort using "the degree of command and control that you consider appropriate" in July 1965.⁵⁹

Lodge however, continued to see himself as the President's personal representative rather than in a managerial or coordinating role for the entire Vietnam effort and unity of effort issues continued.⁶⁰ In November 1965 during a visit to Vietnam, Secretary of Defense McNamara told General Westmoreland "I don't think we have done a thing we can point to that has been effective in five years... show me one area in this country... that we have Pacified."⁶¹

Fortunately, President Johnson and his advisors recognized the shortcomings of the situation and McNamara's comments prompted quick action. In January 1966, in an initial attempt to address the problem, many of the participants in the Pacification effort met and collectively "acknowledged that simply relying on the Ambassador and the MACV commander to 'work

⁵⁹ Andrade, 4-5.

⁶⁰ Scoville, 13-15.

things out' would not ensure Pacification cooperation. A single civil-military focus on Pacification was needed.”⁶² Unfortunately, the conference ended without a concrete resolution and the need for synchronization went unanswered.

In February 1966, President Johnson met with the leaders of the South Vietnamese government in Hawaii and developed a new strategy for the Vietnam War based on three broad components; military pressure, negotiations and Pacification. The new strategy also tasked the South Vietnamese Army with area security, which would allow the US military to concentrate on seeking out enemy forces.⁶³

Johnson also reemphasized the need to coordinate the Pacification program. President Johnson, his advisors and their South Vietnamese counterparts all believed the biggest hurdle to implanting the Pacification program was the decentralized nature of the effort, the disjointed command structure and the competition between the military and civilian agencies working Pacification.⁶⁴

After finalizing the new war strategy, President Johnson appointed Robert W. 'Blowtorch' Komer as the special assistant for Pacification in April 1966. Johnson issued Komer a strong

⁶¹ Andrade, 4-5.

⁶² Ibid., 4-5.

⁶³ Ibid., 4-5.

personal mandate, in writing, to bring the various organizations and agencies in line. Komer brought a reputation for abrasiveness, tenacity and action to the job. According to Scoville, Robert Komer was “the real force behind Pacification in Washington.”⁶⁵

Working out of the White House, Komer studied the Pacification effort to date and visited Vietnam seven times in thirteen months during his effort.⁶⁶ He concluded, “As Pacification is a multifaceted civil/military problem... it demands a multifaceted civil/military response.” Komer was convinced that the problem required a “single managing agency” and that the US military was the right agency to tackle the problem because of the two dominate factors disrupting the effort: security and resources.⁶⁷

By August 1966, Komer authored a paper on the issues and broke the Pacification program into three parts: (1) security of the population, (2) breaking the insurgent hold on the population and (3) the concept of mass, or Pacification on a large scale.⁶⁸ Komer summarized the problem and his recommended solution, “Pacification is as much a military as civilian process, because there can be no civil progress without constant real security... and let’s face another fact; the military

⁶⁴ Frankum, 250-51.

⁶⁵ Scoville, 27.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 31-32.

⁶⁸ Andrade, 4-5.

are far better able to organize, manage and execute major field programs under chaotic wartime conditions than are civilian agencies by and large.”⁶⁹ In short, Komer recommended that the US military run the entire effort: both the conventional war and the civilian Pacification programs.

The State Department continued to resist efforts to consolidate ‘their’ civilian programs under military control. The State Department’s counter-solution to subordinating, and thus synchronizing, Pacification efforts under the US military was the Office of Civil Operations (OCO). The OCO, created in November 1966, combined the personnel and activities of USAID and several other civilian organizations under Deputy Ambassador William Porter. The OCO employed approximately a thousand US civilians and directed a program budget of \$128 million and four billion South Vietnamese piasters. The effort was a failure from the beginning, as it still did not coordinate civilian and military efforts under a single leader.⁷⁰

General Westmoreland eventually agreed with (or grasped the politics of) Komer’s Pacification points and in October 1966, despite MACV staff objections, volunteered MACV as the coordinating headquarters for all Pacification programs.⁷¹ Prior to the formation of the OCO Komer had also lobbied Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that “it was obvious that only the military ‘had the clout’ [or the resources] to get the job done. Komer believed that the

⁶⁹Scoville, 49.

⁷⁰ Andrade, 4.

Defense Department was ‘far stronger behind Pacification’ than the Department of State and was ‘infinitely more dynamic and influential.’⁷²

In March 1967, President Johnson killed the OCO and implemented Komer’s plan through National Security Action Memorandum 362 (NSAM 362). In May 1967, the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support program (CORDS⁷³) replaced the OCO. The new system unequivocally put the military in charge of Pacification.⁷⁴ President Johnson appointed Komer the first MACV CORDS director where he enjoyed direct access to General Westmoreland through his appointment as MACV deputy commander as well as to US Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker⁷⁵ through his appointment at a three star general / ambassadorial rank.⁷⁶ Komer brought William Colby on board as the deputy CORDS director. By bringing Colby on as his Deputy, Komer also brought the CIA into the fold; Colby had extensive service with the CIA in Saigon and throughout SE Asia.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Westmoreland, 220-221.

⁷² Andrade, 4-5.

⁷³ CORDS was originally the Civil Operations and *Revolutionary* Development Support program. It was renamed in 1970 and this is the name most commonly used today.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

⁷⁵ Ellsworth Bunker replaced Henry Cabot Lodge as ambassador in 1967.

⁷⁶ Yates, 82-83.

⁷⁷ William Colby, *Lost Victory: A Firsthand Account of America’s Sixteen Year Involvement in Vietnam* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989), 232-33.

CORDS personnel, military and civilian, immediately went to work in military headquarters throughout South Vietnam. The CORDS program directed all Pacification activity and was responsible for providing advice and support to the South Vietnamese agencies running the country.

CORDS expanded quickly and at its peak in 1969, the program involved nearly 8,500 American advisors (civilian and military) working with thousands more South Vietnamese and other allied advisors. Komer and Colby devised the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) and sent Pacification teams to every rural hamlet and district in South Vietnam. The primary mission of the APC teams was to coordinate the varied Pacification and civil affairs programs of the military branches and the various government agencies and to synchronize their efforts at the lowest levels possible.⁷⁸

Many Americans who participated in the CORDS program considered it highly effective, especially so under General Abrams, but feel that it came too late in the war to affect the war's outcome. Many others who participated in the program, such as Komer, Colby and General Bruce Palmer (MACV deputy commander) assert that CORDS made significant gains between 1969 and 1972.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Frankum, 250-51.

⁷⁹ Andrade, 11.

Another measure of CORDS effectiveness was Hanoi's decision to rely on conventional military means to conquer South Vietnam.⁸⁰ Mr. Colby said of the conventional attacks in 1972 and 1975: "The attacks.... were pure North Vietnamese military attacks. There were no guerillas in those operations because in the interim our program [CORDS] actually won the guerilla war by winning the guerilla to the government."⁸¹

Summarizing the lessons learned from CORDS in *Military Review*, Mr. Dale Andrade writes that despite the Vietnam Wars' outcome there are still significant lessons from CORDS that apply to the current conflict in Iraq. The preeminent point is that

"Unity of effort is imperative; there must be a unified structure that combines [conventional] military and Pacification efforts. The Pacification program in Vietnam did not make any headway until the different agencies involved [came] together under a single manager with the military C2 architecture. Once CORDS... became part of the military chain of command it was easier to get things done. The military tends to regard Pacification as something civilian agencies do; however, only the military has the budget, material and manpower to get the job done ... These lessons might seem obvious, and it is true that with hindsight, they might be easily identified; however, in practice, they are hard to execute. This should not, however, stop us from trying to apply the lessons learned in Southeast Asia to Iraq... CORDS was one of the Vietnam War's success stories, and it's well conceived, well-executed programs and successful synthesis of civilian and military efforts [i.e. unity of effort] offer a useful template for current and future COIN operations."⁸²

⁸⁰ Some argue that because the Tet Offensive effectively destroyed the Viet Cong, the North Vietnamese had no choice but to rely on conventional means. Other authors argue that CORDS was effective in destroying the Viet Cong and that Tet merely hastened their demise.

⁸¹ Ross Coffey "Revisiting CORDS: The Need for Unity of Effort to Secure Victory in Iraq." *Military Review. Combined Arms Center Special Edition. Interagency Reader*. (Ft Leavenworth, KS: US Army, June 2008): 15.

⁸² Andrade, 11.

In summary: The Vietnam War counterinsurgency experience and CORDS in particular, highlight the importance of unity of effort between the Department of Defense and Department of State. The lessons of Vietnam resonate in Iraq today; fortunately, current US Army and Joint Forces doctrine captures the importance of achieving unity of effort.

Department of Defense and US Army Doctrine

Current doctrine is clear: a clear understanding and delineation of roles and responsibilities between the US military and other US Government agencies is essential to achieve unity of effort in Iraq. Solid historical evidence underpins current US COIN doctrine. Early 20th century British and French authors highlight the same key points as our current doctrine: in order to separate the insurgent from the population, civil and military efforts must achieve unity of effort. In the words of David Galula, “Clearly, more than any other kind of warfare, counterinsurgency must respect a single direction. A single boss must direct the operations from beginning to end.”⁸³

In light of the changing operational environment and the demands for increased interagency coordination, among other issues, the US Army rewrote its capstone doctrine, FM 3-0 (Operations). Army leadership recognized that current and future conflicts would involve much more than the past model of Army forces conducting high intensity conventional combat

operations and then giving way to ‘follow on forces’ or deliberate transitions to conduct ‘post combat operations or post-conflict operations’. Army leaders also recognized that current conflicts would require a whole of government approach, and Army forces, when providing the preponderance of ground forces and combat power, would be instrumental in synchronizing and coordinating the whole of government approach required to successfully terminate the conflict.⁸⁴

FM 3-0 “reflects Army thinking in a complex period of prolonged conflicts and opportunities.”⁸⁵ The doctrine also recognizes that the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan defy solutions by military means alone and that land power, while critical, is only part of the solution in each conflict. Achieving success in Iraq, and in future conflicts, will require the protracted application of all the instruments of national power – diplomatic, informational, military and economic. Because of this, US Army doctrine now equally weights tasks dealing with the population – Stability or Civil Support – with those related to conventional high intensity offensive or defensive operations. This new parity is critical:

“It recognizes that 21st century conflict involves more than combat operations between armed opponents. While defeating the enemy with offensive and defensive operations, US Army forces

⁸³ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: From Theory to Practice*, (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1965), 87-88.

⁸⁴ Yates, 1-3.

⁸⁵ Department of the Army, *FM 3-0*, vii-viii.

simultaneously shape the broader situation through nonlethal actions to restore security and normalcy to the local populace.”⁸⁶

The 2008 FM 3-0 also adds emphasis on how Army forces must deal with populations and civil concerns:

“Soldiers operate among the populations, not adjacent to them or above them... winning battles and engagements is important but alone is not sufficient. Shaping the civil situation is just as important to success... America is at war and should expect to remain fully engaged for the next several decades in a persistent conflict against an enemy dedicated to U.S. defeat as a nation and eradication as a society. This conflict will be waged in an environment that is complex, multidimensional, and rooted in the human dimension. This conflict cannot be won by military forces alone; it requires close cooperation and coordination of diplomatic, informational, military and economic efforts.”⁸⁷

The key to achieving the ‘close cooperation and coordination’ of diplomatic, informational and economic efforts with military efforts in the current conflict in Iraq is achieving *unity of effort* through *unified action* between all elements of national power. Joint Publication 1 and FM 3-0 define unified action as:

“...the synchronization, coordination, and / or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort. This involves the application of all instruments of national power, including actions of other government agencies... and nonmilitary organizations. Combatant commanders play a pivotal role in unifying actions; however, subordinate commanders also integrate and synchronize their

⁸⁶ Ibid., vii-viii.

⁸⁷ Ibid., vii-viii.

operations directly with the activities and operations of other... nonmilitary organizations in their area of operations.”⁸⁸

FM 3-24 (Counterinsurgency) also emphasizes achieving unity of effort. According to FM 3-24, “achieving unity of effort is the goal of command and support relationships. All organizations contributing to a COIN operation should strive, or be persuaded to strive, for maximum unity of effort... A clear understanding of the desired end state should infuse all efforts...”⁸⁹

FM 3-24 further states, “Unity of effort must be present at every echelon of a COIN operation.”⁹⁰ Without unity of effort, well intentioned but uncoordinated actions can cancel each other or provide vulnerabilities for insurgents to exploit. Ideally, a single leader has authority over all government agencies involved in COIN operations. The US Ambassador and country team, along with senior Host Nation representatives, must be key players in higher level planning and similar coordination must permeate the entire chain of command.

Current US Army doctrine describes successful COIN operations as ultimately eliminating insurgents or rendering them irrelevant to the situation; the integration of civilian and military efforts is crucial to this success. Political, social and economic programs are usually more

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1-10.

⁸⁹ Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 2-3.

beneficial than conventional military operations, but controlling the level of violence and providing security is still a key aspect of the struggle.⁹¹ When involved in Stability and COIN operations, the keys to success require applying the instruments of national power along multiple logical lines of operation (LLOs). Efforts along LLOs must be closely coordinated and synchronized and uncoordinated actions are often counterproductive. The interdependency of LLOs is total: if one fails, the mission fails (see figure 5-1, FM 3-24 below.) Many LLOs require capabilities provided through civilian organizations and other US Government agencies like the State Department and USAID.⁹²

Coordination and synchronization among the efforts along each LLO is essential. No one line of operation is paramount over the other, each reinforces the others, but if one fails, all will fail. Security and combat operations cannot come at the expense of the other lines of operations, but neither can they advance without security and the combat operations required to gain and maintain a secure environment.⁹³ This is the case today; significant security and Iraqi Security Force gains are in place, but maintaining the gains will require significant combat forces and gains along the other lines of operations in the campaign plan. Without a coordinated and

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1-22.

⁹¹ Ibid., 2-1.

⁹² Ibid., 2-2.

⁹³ Ibid., 5-3.

synchronized effort between the civilian agencies and the US military, the gains along all of the lines of operation are at risk.

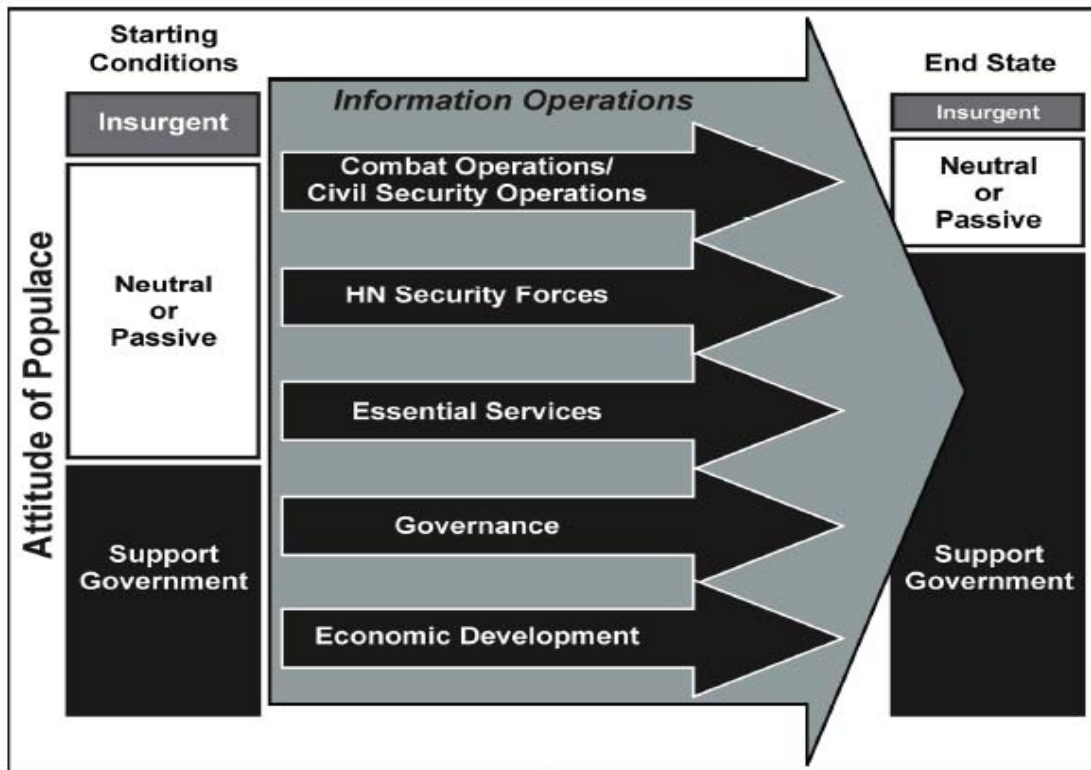


Figure 5-1. Example logical lines of operations for a counterinsurgency

In order to achieve success along all LLOs unity of effort is essential and achieving unity of effort requires unity of command. Military doctrine is clear: in order to achieve unity of command, “command and control of all US Government organizations engaged in a COIN

mission should be exercised by a single leader through a formal command and control system.”⁹⁴

This point is clear to those outside the military as well; the current literature on the war in Iraq reveals that the preponderance of authors and agencies studying and publishing with respect to the war in Iraq generally agree on at least one key issue: *unity of effort is essential* if the US is to prevail in Iraq.⁹⁵

US Government and the Department of State

The White House and State Department have also worked to address the challenging situation in Iraq. Both have issued or rewritten numerous documents and directives to address the problems of coordination and synchronization of stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq.

The *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* and NSPD 44 clearly articulate the need for, and in fact direct, unity of effort in the interagency sense, in the same manner as Joint and US Army doctrine. What is lacking is the achievement of that unity of effort and what is in question is the Department of State’s ability to actualize this vision.

NSPD 44, published in December 2005, more than two and half years after the invasion of Iraq, provides White House guidance to “promote the security of the United States through improved coordination, planning, and implementation for reconstruction and stabilization

⁹⁴ Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 2-2.

⁹⁵ Tony Cappacio, “Audit: Iraq Postwar Plan Poor,” *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, July 28, 2008.

assistance for foreign states and regions at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife.”⁹⁶ NSPD 44 describes the goals of US assistance; “to help [foreign states] establish a sustainable path toward peaceful societies, democracies, and market economies.”⁹⁷

As discussed earlier: NSPD 44 does direct the coordination and synchronization of a whole of government approach to Iraq by designating the Department of State as the lead agency for “reconstruction and stabilization assistance and related activities” and to “harmonize such efforts with US military plans and operations.”⁹⁸ However, NSPD 44 also caveats the designation of the State Department as the lead agency in all endeavors by also stating, “Support relationships among elements of the US government will depend on the particular situation being addressed.”⁹⁹ NSPD 44 also states “within the scope of this NSPD, and in order to maintain clear accountability and responsibility for any given contingency response or stabilization and reconstruction mission, lead and supporting responsibilities for agencies and departments will be designated using the mechanisms outlined in NSPD-1. These lead and supporting relationships will be re-designated as transitions are required.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Bush, *NSPD 44*, 1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were originally developed in 2002 in Afghanistan as a means of solving the problems the US military faced bridging a ‘capabilities gap’ in diplomatic and development capacities. While the US military can stabilize an area through purely military means, it lacks a comprehensive whole of government ability to transition the area to an indigenous capability to support and govern itself. The problem is especially acute in areas that still require large military forces to conduct Stability and COIN to ensure security, but also require development along more traditional diplomatic, economic and governance lines of operation.¹⁰¹

The 2002 PRTs developed in Afghanistan were a Department of Defense initiative and involve various multi-national and NATO elements. These PRTs were, and are, militarily led and comprised mostly of military personnel. The Afghanistan PRT concept proved sound and the US Government took it forward into Iraq. The key differences in PRTs operating in Iraq however, is that they are State Department led, but intended to be manned equally with civilian and military personnel.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), *PRT Playbook; Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures No. 07-34*, (Ft Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army, 2007), 4.

¹⁰² Baghdad Cable 4045, 1.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team (ePRT) have since emerged and/or evolved as the most visible and primary means of applying all aspects of national power in Iraq to achieve the ‘whole of government approach’ to stability and reconstruction. The US military has actively studied the PRT problem in Iraq by sending teams from the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) throughout Iraq. CALL studied the issue extensively and captured its observations and recommendations in the PRT Handbook. The CALL PRT Handbook states:

PRTs [in Iraq] were established as a result of the need to develop the infrastructure necessary for the... Iraqi people to succeed... PRTs have become an integral part of the long term strategy to transition the lines of security, governance and economics to the [Iraqi people]. Integrated appropriately, PRTs serve as combat multipliers for maneuver commanders... In addition, PRTs serve as force multipliers for US Government development agencies engaged across the stability and reconstruction sectors.”¹⁰³

In other words, PRTs are the focus of interagency Stability and Reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

The same study also found the transition from military led Stability operations and counter insurgency operations to State Department led peacekeeping operations to eventual full Iraqi governance will be gradual. PRTs in unstable or non-permissive environments require robust military capabilities and the role of the military is preeminent in these areas. In more stable and more secure areas where overall security is sustainable by the local government and indigenous

¹⁰³ CALL, 5.

forces with a smaller or offset US military presence the role of the PRT will be preeminent. Eventually the PRT will completely withdraw and the indigenous local government and security forces will operate independently.¹⁰⁴

The PRT is also expensive in terms of personnel and support, which introduces manpower and resources into the equation. Because of the high costs associated with manning and equipping PRTs, “it is incumbent on the embassy country team, military chain of command..., participating agencies and PRT leadership to keep PRTs focused on their ultimate goal and avoid all activities that do not directly contribute to accomplishing their mission.”¹⁰⁵ The missions, activities and objectives of the PRT must account for, and compliment, the strategies of the military and other agencies involved as well as the host nation and the US Government’s National Strategy. All involved agencies must continually adjust and evaluate the PRT’s missions and objectives.¹⁰⁶ Put another way; PRTs must be fully manned and resourced to be effective, and PRTs need MOE to assess their progress.

According to their design, PRTs focus on the operational and tactical level, but the interagency natures of their structure and activities cuts across many sectors (security, governance and economic) and their activities must be aligned with corresponding military efforts. The PRT

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 5.

Playbook states: “Operational interagency guidance is the implementing glue between overarching strategic goals and local [operational and tactical] execution. This guidance delineates the separate agency [and military] areas of responsibility and ensures a common assessment and understanding...”¹⁰⁷ It follows that any discontinuity in the PRT’s efforts is likely to create difficulty in achieving unity of effort with the military inside the PRT’s area. PRTs thus play an integral interagency role in informing and refining guidance and planning from both military and US Government agency headquarters, as do the PRTs military counterparts.

Ultimately, the interagency process must ensure that the civil-military team of the US military and the PRT achieves a common operating picture of the area that they both operate in and “a common vision on how to affect the environment. The common vision will in turn provide for unity of effort within the PRT” and between the military and the other agencies involved on the PRT.¹⁰⁸

The Short History of Interagency Coordination in Iraq

National Security Presidential Directive 24 (signed January 20, 2003) put the Department of Defense in charge of postwar Iraq. The Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁸ CALL, 5.

(OHRA), the first organization charged with ‘handling postwar Iraq’. The US Government established the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) under the Department of Defense on January 20, 2003 two months before the 2003 Iraq invasion. The OHRA was to act as a temporary administration in Iraq until the creation of a democratically elected civilian government.¹⁰⁹ According to Gordan and Trainor, Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed misgivings about the decision, but “took the position that the Pentagon had the money and resources for the postwar mission and therefore [were] entitled to run it.”¹¹⁰

Retired US Army General Jay Garner became the Director of ORHA on April 21, 2003. Due to his experiences in Iraq (Operation DESERT STORM in 1991) and his reconstruction efforts in northern Iraq (Operation PROVIDE COMFORT), Garner's credentials and close ties to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made him an obvious choice for the job. ORHA dissolved only a few later however, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) took its place and Garner transitioned to the head of the CPA. For reasons beyond the scope of this monograph, Secretary Rumsfeld fired Garner and replaced him with L. Paul Bremer on May 11, 2003.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2007) 81.

¹¹⁰ Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006) 149-151.

¹¹¹ Ricks, 154-55.

The Department of Defense also ran the CPA and L. Paul Bremer reported directly to the Secretary of Defense. Although troops from several of the coalition countries were present in Iraq at this time it was the US military who provided direct combat support to the CPA to enforce its authority during the occupation of Iraq. In theory, unity of effort should have existed in the postwar effort as all major participants (the CPA and the armed forces) answered to the Department of Defense. In hindsight, and while it is beyond the scope of this monograph, suffice it say that unity of effort issues greatly hampered the efforts of the CPA and the armed forces during the CPA's tenure.¹¹² Two of the best-known debacles are L. Paul Bremer's de-bathification order and the disbanding of the Iraqi Army.¹¹³ After a year in power the CPA transferred power to the newly appointed interim Iraqi Government (IIG) on June 28, 2004 and Paul Bremer left Iraq that same day.

While the efforts of the CPA towards unity of effort are uncertain at best, the CPA did leave behind an important organization (with respect to interagency unity of effort). The Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) is the successor to the Coalition Provisional Authority Office of Inspector General (CPA-IG).

¹¹² L. Elaine Halchin, *The Coalition Provisional Authority: Origin, Characteristics and Institutional Authorities*, (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2005) 1-5, 41.

¹¹³ Gordon, 478-480.

The congressional amendment creating SIGIR from the CPA allows SIGIR to continue the same oversight that CPA-IG established for Iraq reconstruction programs and operations, many of which are State Department efforts. SIGIR also audits the performance of PRTs and ePRTs. SIGIR reports administratively to the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense and provides quarterly and semi-annual reports directly to the U.S. Congress.

After the CPA dissolved, National Security Presidential Directive 36 (NSPD 36), published May 11, 2004, created some of the CPA's successors: The Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO) within the Department of State and the Project Contracting Office (PCO) within the Department of Defense.¹¹⁴ The two agencies, reporting to different Departments, but with overlapping responsibilities (although unclear responsibilities) further exacerbated the unity of effort issues inherent in the CPA.

NSDP 36 divided responsibilities for the overall effort in Iraq between the Department of State and Department of Defense:

When the CPA is terminated, the United States will be represented in Iraq by a Chief of Mission, who on my behalf [President Bush] and under the guidance of the Secretary of State, shall be responsible for the direction, coordination and supervision of all United States Government employees, policies, and activities in country, except those under the command of an area military commander, and employees seconded to an International Organization... Commander, USCENTCOM, under the authority, direction and control of the Secretary of Defense, shall continue to be responsible for US efforts with respect to security and military

¹¹⁴ Halchin, 5.

operations in Iraq. In all activities, the Chief of Mission and Commander, US CENTCOM shall ensure the closest cooperation and mutual support.

NSDP does not use the words *stability* or *reconstruction*. It can be inferred that unity of effort would suffer however, that if the Military is specifically charged with “security and military operations” and the Chief of Mission is responsible for “activities in country, except those under... a military commander”, given the Joint and Army definitions of *Stability Operations*.

In early 2005 the US mission introduced Provincial Support Teams (PSTs) and Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committees (PRDCs). The PRDC-PST intended to link the newly elected Iraqi provincial governments and Ministries and coordinate the reconstruction effort. By the US Mission’s own admission, the effort failed.¹¹⁵

The next major attempt to coordinate stabilization and reconstruction activities between the US military and civilian agencies came October 1, 2005. The US Mission issued Cable 4045 ‘Action Plan to Build Capacity and Sustainability within Iraq’s Provincial Governments’ to the collective agencies (civilian and military) operating in Iraq.¹¹⁶ Cable 4045 is a *coordinated* US Mission / MNF-I document. Cable 4045 recommended “to deploy joint, civil-military Provincial

¹¹⁵ Baghdad Cable 4045, 1-2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

Reconstruction Teams¹¹⁷ to each [province]” and “lays out the mission, tasks and goals related to *implementation* of [the] new initiative.”¹¹⁸

Cable 4045 is ambiguous. It relates to the *implementation* of the PRT mission. The *proposed* PRT mission statement is:

To assist Iraq’s provincial governments with developing a transparent and sustained capability to govern, promote increased security and rule of law, promote political and economic development, and provide provincial administration necessary to meet the basic needs of the population.”¹¹⁹

While Cable 4045 provides a series of broad based PRT goals, it does not provide any concrete goals, objectives or MOE for PRTs. The cable addresses goals and MOE by stating: “Determining successful achievement of... goals will be based on qualitative measurements against established benchmarks. Mission and MNF-I are currently *developing* metrics...”¹²⁰

It is unclear what metrics Mission and MNF-I developed between October 2005 and October 2007 (two years later). SIGIR reports published in October 2006, July 2007 and October 2007

¹¹⁷ ePRTs were added to the program in a Memorandum of Agreement between the State Department and Department of Defense in February 2007.

¹¹⁸ Baghdad Cable 4045, 1.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 5.

found that lack of objectives and performance measures, among other items, continued to stifle synchronization and coordination between PRTs and the US military.

The next State Department effort to address synchronizing PRT and ePRTs, implemented through the US Embassy in Iraq, established the Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) in May 2007 under the leadership of an ambassador-level coordinator. The OPA coordinator provides the operational direction to the PRTs and ePRTs operating with the US military in Iraq.¹²¹

In the latest of three SIGIR audits of PRT and ePRT program effectiveness (SIGIR-07-015; published in October 2007), investigators reviewing the actions of PRTs and ePRTs in Iraq concluded that “Iraq’s complex and overlapping sectarian, political, and ethnic conflicts, as well as the difficult security situation, continue to hinder progress in promoting economic development, rule of law and political reconciliation.”¹²²

SIGIR makes two overarching recommendations in the October 2007 report:

1. In an expeditious manner, jointly establish a comprehensive plan for the PRTs (including ePRTs), with elements tailored for each PRT. At a minimum, the plan should: (a) clearly define objectives and performance measures, (b) clearly define milestones for achieving stated objectives, (c) be linked to funding requirements, (d) identify the organization(s) within each agency that are accountable for the plan’s implementation. To provide senior level attention to this issue, the plan should be approved by the Office of the Chief of Mission and the MNF-I Commander to demonstrate each agency’s commitment to this effort.

¹²¹ SIGIR, 1.

¹²² Ibid., ii.

2. Develop guidance on the use and synchronization of Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds to support the US governments' capacity-development mission.

The report also finds there is a pressing need to “develop clearly defined objectives and performance measures to guide PRT and ePRT activities and measure their accomplishments” [as] discussed in SIGIR’s two previous reports and SIGIR still considers a plan to be an essential tool for those purposes.¹²³

In light of the October 2007 SIGIR report and previous reports issued in October 2006 and July 2007, also recommending clearly defined objectives and performance measures to guide PRTs and ePRTs, SIGIR auditors took action on their own. On several occasions during the course of the 2007 audit SIGIR “approached officials of [the Office of Provincial Affairs] concerning the development of objectives and performance measures. [SIGIR] also offered to work collaboratively with [Office of Provincial Affairs] staff to help develop these measurement indicators, but... were unable to obtain [Office of Provincial Affairs] participation.”¹²⁴

Throughout these developments, members of the US military continue to study the problem of synchronizing stability and reconstruction efforts in order to achieve unity of effort. In a monograph published at the Army War College, COL John Drolet argues for a single chain of

¹²³ Ibid., xi.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 5.

command to address the issues. COL Drolet writes, “There must be a designated lead agency for the reconstruction and capacity development phase of any operation. This will ensure a strong unity of effort and allow all supporting organizations to understand their roles, responsibilities, and resource requirements.”¹²⁵ COL Drolet emphasizes that the “establishment and maintenance of a secure environment is essential for the success of all post-conflict activities” and concludes, “no mission that the US government undertakes will be successful if the goals and objectives are not clearly defined and understood...”¹²⁶

Comparison

The current coordination of Department of State and Department of Defense efforts with respect to PRTs is similar to the efforts undertaken in Vietnam during the development of the CORDS program.

A key difference between Vietnam and Iraq is the status of the respective governments. Vietnam had a somewhat functional and existing government whereas the invasion of Iraq toppled the existing government and its institutions. Initial decisions regarding the disposition of former Iraqi government institutions and Army likely made the situation in Iraq far more complicated than that faced in Vietnam.

¹²⁵ John Drolet, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Afghanistan vs. Iraq – Should We Have A Standard Model?” (Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College Monograph, 2007), 14.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 15.

Another key aspect of the Vietnam vs. Iraq discussion is the status of the respective US embassy and country teams. The US embassy and country team operated in South Vietnam for years prior to the decision to begin large-scale military involvement. This experience gave US diplomats in Vietnam a decided advantage over their counterparts operating in Iraq in 2003. The US closed the embassy doors in Baghdad from 1991 – 2004 and did not execute formal diplomatic relations with Iraq during that time.

The disjointed efforts to achieve Department of State and Department of Defense unity of effort in Vietnam are similar to current efforts in Iraq. General Westmoreland's logic to focus on the conventional threat is strikingly similar to that of US commanders in Iraq in late 2003 and 2004 with respect to the nature of the enemy threat (failure to recognize the insurgency) in Iraq and the US military response.¹²⁷ The logic of the growth of the military headquarters structure in Vietnam is similar to Iraq; the initial decision to replace the CFLCC with V Corps, the growth of MNF-I, MNC-I and MNSTC-I to fill requirements parallel similar efforts to those of MACV and its subordinate Corps replacing MAAGV.

The stumbling and misdeeds of the OHRA and CPA are beyond the scope of this monograph, but they are relevant when compared to similar missteps in the Pacification effort in Vietnam; the CPA was only an initial, but one of many, failed attempts to get interagency coordination right.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Ricks, 168-172.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 324-329, 391.

When the CPA ended, it ushered in Iraqi ‘sovereignty’ and the beginnings of Department of State efforts, which marked an increase in the interagency coordination problems.

As in Vietnam in the early 1960’s, efforts to avoid military control of ‘civilian’ programs are evident in the PSTs and PRDC. Shortly after their creation, the Department of State itself acknowledged that the PSTs and PRDC efforts were “generally unable to accomplish all actions mandated.”¹²⁹ Another Department of State effort, OPA is similar to the Mission Council and the OCO of the Vietnam War described earlier in the monograph; like the OCO in Vietnam, OPA failed to achieve interagency unity of effort in Iraq.

The point of the comparison is in the ‘final solutions’ to the Iraq and Vietnam interagency efforts. President Johnson ended the Vietnam era debate through NSDM 362 and put all Pacification efforts under Department of Defense control, but ensured unity of effort through a civilian MACV deputy commander. President Bush issued NSPD 44 with the same intent. Although NSPD 44 is similar in both intent and timing, there is a critical difference: NSAM 362 put the Department of Defense in charge of Pacification while NSPD 44 puts the Department of State in charge of stability and reconstruction in Iraq.

It is also interesting to note that NSPD 36, published prior to NSPD 44, divides, rather than unifies, the control of the effort in Iraq between the Department of State and Department of

¹²⁹ Baghdad Cable 4045, 1.

Defense, but does not mention the terms ‘stability’ or ‘reconstruction’. Therefore, while President Johnson fought to unify the Pacification effort in Vietnam, it appears that President Bush (intentional or not) is taking steps which complicate Iraq war unity of effort through various and non-prescriptive directives.

Presently the Department of State continues to ‘address’ the issues. The State Department’s Strategic Plan for FY 2007-2012 outlines key goals for the future in Iraq. The Department of State and USAID “will continue to work with interagency partners, regional allies and the private sector to advance US foreign policy. The Department of States foremost policy priority with respect to Iraq is help the Iraqi people build a democratic, stable and economically prosperous Iraq.”¹³⁰ However, the State Department’s Strategic Plan is not a *plan* in the conventional sense of the word. The document is aspirational in nature, but does not specifically address how to achieve the ends.

The Department of State is neither manned nor budgeted to lead the effort in Iraq. At its peak in Vietnam, CORDS employed 1,100 civilians alone (and another 8,500 military). Today there are more personnel in Army bands than in the entire Department of State; in fact, today there are only 6,500 Foreign Service officers and 1,100 USAID officers total, less than the number of

¹³⁰ Condoleeza Rice, *Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2007-2012* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2007), 16, 50.

personnel employed in Vietnam alone, at the peak of CORDS.¹³¹ Department of State manpower shortages are so acute, as of August 2008, that they have resorted to posting job openings on the official Department of State website seeking qualified US citizens to fill key billets in Iraq.¹³²

In recent testimony before the House Armed Services committee Secretary of State Rice highlighted her request, to be included in the 2009 budget, for funding to hire an additional 1,100 Foreign Service officers and 300 USAID officers.¹³³ Both Secretary Rice and Gates acknowledge the problem and Secretary Gates openly noted that the State Department “has been chronically undermanned and underfunded for far too long.”¹³⁴

It is likely that Secretaries Gates and Rice intended their remarks to counter the testimony of Rick Olson before the same committee in December 2007. Mr. Olson is a retired General Officer, former commander of CJTF 76 in Afghanistan and former deputy director of IRMO in Iraq. He is the current chief of staff of SIGIR and thus in a position well qualified to comment on PRTs and stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

¹³¹ Condoleezza Rice, “Building Partnership Capacity and Development of the Interagency Process.” (Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee. Washington DC. April 15 2008). <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/04/103589.htm>. (accessed 2 August 08).

¹³² Department of State, *Job Search*, <http://jobsearch.usajobs.gov/jobsearch.asp> (accessed 2 August 08).

¹³³ Condoleezza Rice, “*Building Partnership Capacity and Development of the Interagency Process*,” 2-3.

Mr. Olson summarized his testimony before the House Armed Services Committee with several challenges facing PRTs.¹³⁵ The first challenge is that geography exceeds the capabilities of the PRTs and only military assets, provided ‘as available’ allow the PRTs to execute their mission. The second challenge is that civilians on PRTs are subject to Chief of Mission security restrictions on travel and / or often reliant on risk averse contracted security personnel. The third challenge is that “PRTs fall somewhere between the Department of Defense and Department of State in terms of how they are considered, supported and treated in the interagency community.”¹³⁶ The fourth, and most telling challenge, is that “considerable lip service notwithstanding, PRT’s are not a resourcing priority for the agencies tasked to support them.”¹³⁷

At the time of Mr. Olson’s testimony, Secretary of State Rice’s 2007 ‘civilian surge’ was failing: of the 160 initial posts (of 600 total) requiring civilian fill, all but a handful were filled by military personnel with little hope of fill by actual State Department employees.¹³⁸ In the short term, it appears, the Department of State continues to rely on military augmentation and contractors while requesting funding for more Foreign Service officers. Hiring and training

¹³⁴ David Ignatius, “Gates Next Mission,” Washington Post, August 17, 2008.

¹³⁵ Rick Olson, *Testimony before the House Armed Services Community*, Washington DC, December 05, 2007, 1-8.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 7.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 8.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 8.

additional Foreign Service officers is a solution that is years in the making however and in the present critical manpower and experience shortages undermine Department of State efforts to effectively coordinate the interagency process in Iraq.

Recommendation

In order to achieve unity of effort in Iraq for Stabilization and Reconstruction the US Government should adopt a CORDS-like approach and designate the Department of Defense the lead agency. All Department of State Stabilization and Reconstruction efforts should fall under Department of Defense to facilitate interagency coordination and resourcing. When Iraq effectively transitions to a post-conflict environment, the State Department should reassume lead agency responsibilities for Stabilization and Reconstruction activities.

Conclusion

The key to victory in Stability and Counterinsurgency operations is the integration of all efforts, civilian and military, towards a single common and well-understood goal: unity of effort. While this sounds obvious, it is difficult to achieve and rarely occurs. In most historically unsuccessful COIN efforts, and in Vietnam prior to the formation of CORDS, military forces concentrated on conventional 'war fighting' and left the job of building infrastructure, establishing governance and working on the economy to civilian agencies. The reality is that

neither mission is more important than the other is; security cannot come at the cost of other lines of operation, but there must be security in order to progress in other areas. The OCO from Vietnam, the defunct CPA from the early part of the Iraq war, and the current Office of Provisional Affairs in Baghdad have all claimed to have combined and coordinated civilian and military efforts, but none has really done so.¹³⁹ In this respect the CORDS program, once instituted, offers an example of achieving the desired level of coordination and resourcing and sets an historical precedent for taking similar actions in Iraq today.

It is logical to deduce that while the war in Iraq is still in the *conflict* phase, the US military will execute combat intensive Stability and COIN rather than *peacekeeping* operations. Again, the critical difference between peacekeeping and stability operations and counterinsurgency is essential to understand. Stability operations are part of the full spectrum operations Army forces conduct during Joint Campaigns; combat is expected and security is not assured. In peacekeeping operations, combat is not expected - indeed this is key point.¹⁴⁰ The Department of Defense will provide the preponderance of forces and assets during Stability operations while other agencies will do so during peacekeeping operations. Given the current and foreseeable level of violence, the Department of Defense, through the US Army, remains the *de facto*, if not technically the *de jure*, lead agency in day to day operations in Iraq.

¹³⁹ Andrade, 3.

In order to achieve unity of effort in Iraq, the US military and civilian agencies must effectively coordinate their actions and efforts. Joint and Army doctrine clearly addresses the issue:

“Interagency coordination is inherent in unified action. Within the context of Department of Defense involvement, interagency coordination is the coordination that occurs between elements of Department of Defense and engaged U.S. Government agencies for the purposes of achieving an objective. In addition, unified action involves synchronizing... military operations with activities of other government agencies, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and contractors. Commanders must understand the respective roles and capabilities of civilian organizations in unified action.”¹⁴¹

The recent CALL PRT Playbook (September 2007) clearly articulates the difficulty in deciding which agency is the *de facto* lead in Iraq and when and how to transition between lead agencies.

The CALL publication does highlight that there is a choice of lead agency: “Though in charge, the Chief of Mission [the US Ambassador] or designated authority, in concert with the National Command Authority, may designate a specific US Government department as the lead agency. In a situation where active combat is expected or underway, the Department of Defense may be the lead with other agencies in a supporting role. Where the environment is clearly post conflict and instability is has diminished, the lead shifts to the Department of State...”¹⁴² The CALL

¹⁴⁰ Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 1-20.

¹⁴¹ Department of the Army, *FM 3-0*, 1-12.

¹⁴² CALL, 13.

recommendations to consider a different lead agency are supported by NSPD 44, signed by President Bush in December 2005:

The Secretaries of State and Defense will develop a general framework for fully coordinating stabilization and reconstruction activities and military operations at all levels where appropriate... Within the scope of this NSPD, and in order to maintain clear accountability and responsibility for any given...stabilization and reconstruction mission, lead and supporting agencies and departments will be designated using the mechanism outlined in NSPD-1. *These lead and supporting relationships will be re-designated as transitions are required.* [Emphasis added.]

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